Medicine Hat The Gas City

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MEDIA RELEASE

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TIPS TO PREVENT FROZEN WATER PIPES

Medicine Hat – Due to the extreme cold weather, the Environmental Utilities department (EU) advises residents of the possibility of frozen water pipes.

With the recent cold weather, EU has received many calls and responded to frozen pipes located inside houses.

If a homeowner experiences frozen pipes, the most likely places to find the frozen area are:

- near the basement floor where the cold air supply to the furnace is streaming cold air across the floor and freezing the pipe where it enters the house,
- where pipes are located near basement windows,
- where pipes are located close to outside walls or near a cold draft.

Homeowners can locate the frozen area by feeling the pipes for a cold spot. This area can then be thawed out by using a hair dryer or paint stripper to heat the pipes.

"In no case should an open flame be used to thaw pipes," says Ralph Havinga, Field Operations Manager. "This is extremely dangerous due to the possibility of fire."

Homeowners can reduce the risk of frozen and broken water pipes by:

- redirecting cold air away from water pipes,
- opening cupboard doors under sinks so pipes are exposed to warm air from the house,
- adding insulation between pipes and walls.

Another area of concern is if a residence has an outside clean-out on the sewer pipe. Usually the water and sewer pipes are located in the same trench. Cold air can move down the clean-out and freeze the adjacent water pipe. An insulated box around the exposed part of the clean-out pipe can help prevent cold air going down the pipe.

"It is recommended not to put anything into the clean-out which may fall into the sewer pipe and cause a sewer backup," adds Havinga. "If the pipe has frozen because of an exposed clean-out, running water in a very thin stream - a little smaller than the size of a pencil - inside the home will help to prevent the water pipe from freezing outside the house again."

Frozen pipes are not only an inconvenience but can result in split or broken pipes. A broken water pipe may cause a serious problem resulting in water damage inside the home.

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